

CHAPTER V

A POSTMODERN QUEST: SEEKING GOD AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

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The theme of seeking God in a postmodern context reminds me about an experience which Tomáš Halík describes in his book *Patience with God*. Once, Halík saw on the wall of a subway station the inscription “Jesus is the answer!” Everyone finds such words on the walls all over the world from time to time. This inscription, however, was not like the others. Someone else had added the following words: “But what was the question?”¹ This humorous scene, in my opinion, reveals something important, something that we may easily forget. In short, when we dare to speak about God, questions are far more important than answers.

The Church experiences difficulties in finding a new phase in the relationship to the world she wants to speak with. Charles Taylor clearly points out that the phenomenon of seekers, and not only the phenomenon but their very presence, is rather neglected.

There is a mode of spiritual seeking which is very widespread in the West today, but which the official Church often seems to want to rebuff. Seekers ask questions, but the official Church seems largely concerned with pushing certain already worked-out answers. It seems to have little capacity to listen.²

Who are these seekers? According to Taylor, they are people looking for authenticity. They expect the Church to create a place of authenticity instead of a place of power. I dare to add another distinctive element. Seekers live in the midst of an uncertain postmodern world; a world which is full of challenges, doubts, and questions. In short, seekers are the *people of questions*. What method should be applied in

¹ Cf. Tomáš Halík, *Patience with God: The Story of Zacchaeus Continuing in Us* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 6.

² Quoted from George F. McLean, “Disjunctions in the 21st Century,” in: *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Ch. Taylor, J. Casanova and G. F. McLean (Washington: Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2012), p. 5.

order to approach them? What language should be used to address them? These questions summarize the main task of this chapter.

A DOUBLE CHALLENGE

The Church faces a double challenge in a secular postmodern context. The difficulty of communicating faith applies both *ad extra* (in the public square) as well as *ad intra* (in the Church). In both cases we are confronted with the problem of language. How to talk about God in a new understandable way? How to appeal to seekers without being coercive? And, last but not least, to whom does the Church want to speak?

Perhaps the language problems of the Church are caused by the wrong reading of the current situation through the so-called secular paradigm. It presupposes an old-fashioned bipolar distinction between believers and non-believers; the Christian Church and the secular world.³ Not to mention that this bi-polar reading, suggesting an ongoing fight between the secular and the religious, is tempting the Church to build up a ghetto and consequently neglect real problems and challenges. Through this prism, theology can rather easily distinguish between two groups of people: believers and non-believers, and perhaps add another group of those who are somewhere *in between*, sometimes closer to the religious position, and at other times closer to the non-religious position. This analysis naturally influences the way of theologizing and consequently, the manner of communicating the Christian message. It informs the method in which the Church addresses believers, conducts dialogue with non-believers and, last but not least, appeals to the grey-zone in between. But what if the grey zone were not that grey? It is difficult though to set off on a journey into unknown water and leave the secure place of the secular paradigm behind.

The claim that the secular paradigm is a wrong reading of the current times and, thus, all the attempts to solve the problem, based on this wrong interpretation, are doomed,⁴ does not suggest that the Western context is not secular in terms of Taylor's opus magnum, *A Secular Age*. Without any doubts (1) God/religion has been removed from the public square (politics, social questions, public policy, etc.); (2) the number of Church goers is continually decreasing; (3) the conditions

³ Cf. Martin Kočí, "Jeden ze ztracených klíčů," *Universum* 20, no. 2 (2010): pp. 38-40.

⁴ For example, the project of New Evangelization fails to recognize new shifts in the current context which cannot be described as simply secular.

of belief have changed.⁵ The Church acknowledges the first point, deals with the second point, but nevertheless almost neglects the third point. Nonetheless, it is *secularization 3* that is the most interesting, for Taylor as well as for us. If we want to understand seekers (meaning: who they are? and what they seek?), we must be courageous and admit that the conditions of Christian belief have changed. We must recognize that to be placed *in between* believers and non-believers today means something substantially different from only a few decades ago.

It seems more reasonable and adequate to describe our context in terms of detraditionalisation and pluralisation.⁶ What does it mean? Detraditionalisation implies that traditions and identities (religious, secular, political, etc.) do not pass from one generation to another. An individual identity is not pre-given any more. Neither Christianity, nor any other basic story is able to grant an unquestionable and secure identity in a postmodern context. This opinion is based on Jean-François Lyotard and his claim that postmodern conditions can be defined “as incredulity towards metanarratives.”⁷ Even though some theologians do not subscribe to this diagnosis fully, they mostly agree that the problem of communicating faith is linked to the identity problem.⁸ Identity must be constructed in the interaction with pluralistic context. Pluralisation describes the richness and colourfulness of the contemporary era as well as an endless opportunity to choose. On the one hand, the Church faces an ongoing decontextualization of individual identities. On the other hand, individual identities must be more reflexive and open. In sum, the Church, in its commendable effort to approach people beyond its own borders, must be aware that there is no common Christian background. Perhaps there is no common background at all.⁹

⁵ Cf. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 1-25.

⁶ Cf. Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007), pp. 16-26.

⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

⁸ For example, Nicholas Lash does not agree with Lyotard's accusation that all grand narratives lapse necessarily into hegemonic patterns. “The Christian story of everything, I have been suggesting, is the story of God's being as gift, as self-gift establishing and enlivening the world.” According to Lash, although Christians participate in a grand narrative, they have to bear in mind its givenness. The Christian narrative is, therefore, not in the possession of Christians but something received from the Giver of everything. Nicholas Lash, *Holiness, Speech and Silence: Reflections on the Question of God* (Aldershot, Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2004), pp. 23-49; quotation: p. 43.

⁹ Cf. Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, p. 51.

Assuming the current context of Christianity, it would not be a surprise that there is a certain difficulty of communicating faith *ad extra*.

The Christian experience of reality can only be adequately communicated to those who have a minimal familiarity with the particularities of the Christian narrative, or are at least prepared to become acquainted with it.... The Christian narrative constitutes its own (dynamic) symbolic space, that is, its own hermeneutical horizon. Becoming acquainted with Christianity is thus something akin to learning a language, a complex event that presumes grammar, vocabulary, formation of habits, and competence as much as it does empathy.... This implies as well that if one wants to know something of Christianity, one will have to familiarize oneself to a certain degree with its narratives, vocabulary, practices, and views – regardless of whether one is sharing (or is willing to share) them or not.¹⁰

From the opposite side, the omnipresent temptation to petrify historical forms of Christian narrative implies difficulties with regard to communicating faith *ad intra*. “The contextual changes put pressure on the Christian tradition as it has been given shape in the previous decades and centuries and is handed down to us.”¹¹ Charles Taylor refers to the same problem in his essay “The Church Speaks – To Whom?” Seekers have a feeling “that the answers given by the Churches are just too quick, too pat, that they do not reflect a search.”¹²

In sum, we deal with the double language problem. On the one hand, the Church has trouble with an old language no longer understandable among the dwellers. On the other hand, it is barely possible to communicate even the Christian basics in a context which is not familiar with the symbolic language of Christianity.

Outsiders need to familiarize themselves with the 'narrative thickness' of Christianity in order to understand it. Insiders need to bear witness to *Deus semper maior* in their God-talk. However, it is a mistake to mix up these two different problems of language. “The *ad intra* problem of searching for a new language is often wrongly seen as the

¹⁰ Lieven Boeve, “Communicating Faith in Contemporary Europe: Dealing with Language Problems in and outside the Church,” in *Communicating Faith*, ed. John Sullivan (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), pp. 302–303.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹² Charles Taylor, “The Church Speak – To Whom?,” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor, José Casanova and George F. McLean, Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series 8. Christian philosophical studies 1 (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), p. 18.

solution for the communication problems *ad extra*.¹³ In other words, the internal renewal – a new theological language – does not solve the problem. And vice versa, the recuperation of cultural standards – changing theological language – does not make the Christian narrative more authentic.

We find ourselves in a peculiar situation. We must search for a theologically legitimate and contextually plausible language. We can never speak about God adequately, but we must do it. Who could help us? What about postmodern philosophy and postmodern thinkers? Indeed, it seems that postmodern authors in their so-called ‘turn to religion’ might be of help. Moreover, the theme of language is for them crucial. Perhaps we will find some inspiration there.

POSTMODERN IMPULSES

Postmodern philosophers try to avoid the trap of language because they rightly fear the temptation to exhaust mystery in inappropriate words. The spectre of onto-theology portraying God in schematic definitions is still haunting around as an undesirable heritage of modernity.¹⁴ Thus, postmodern authors often begin to think about the problem of naming God from the following presupposition:

Our religious language tries to bring God under control, to assimilate God within our ready-made systems of meaning, to turn God into a reassuring projection of our own need and desires. Such religious language is a barrier against God's strangeness: that is why God's attack on language is launched primarily against the beachhead of human religiosity.¹⁵

¹³ Lieven Boeve, “Communicating Faith in Contemporary Europe, p. 305. Boeve expressed the same even before: “It would be a misconception, however, to think that recontextualization is capable of solving the entire communication problem, let alone that it has the capacity to convince non-Christians, ex-Christians (or even potential Christians) once again of the validity of the Christian narrative. The *ad extra* problem is not in the first place a matter of the renewal of faith language, but of the familiarity with it (initiation).” Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, p. 54.

¹⁴ I elaborate on this problem in Martin Kočí, “God in Question: Questioning as a Prerequisite for Theology,” *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica* 4, no. 1 (2014): pp. 51-66.

¹⁵ Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2012), pp. 32–33.

Jean-Luc Marion, for example, suggests a radical phenomenological approach to naming God.¹⁶ In line with classical phenomenology, Marion considers a human subject to be a passive recipient of what appears to him/her. For Marion, however, what appears is given and, thus, “the whole metaphysics of *naming* God must give way to a new understanding of God as pure *giving*.”¹⁷ Religious language is only responsive to this primal givenness. Thus, for Marion, there is a pre-linguistic universal structure of religion. This structure presupposes an absolutely passive subject in a totally asymmetrical relationship with the other-God. At the end of the day, Marion ends up in a purely negative theology without any intention to name God. “It is not what is being said that is of real importance, but that something is said.”¹⁸ By doing so, Marion tries to overcome the onto-theological paradigm. Paradoxically, he creates a new onto-theological structure of an absolute impossibility to name God. One is simply lost in the darkness of negations. Theologians must ask: does the refusal to name the other (God) serve us better?

Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo propose a radical hermeneutical approach to religion based on the philosophy of deconstruction. They suggest the concept of ‘pure religion’ without/beyond religion.¹⁹ For them, the other is inaccessible. Nothing meaningful can be said about it. The fact that a religious language is unavoidable means the contamination of pure religion. According to Boeve, this concept results in a committed agnosticism.²⁰ It favours, indeed, behaving *etsi Deus daretur*, however, without knowing whether the addressee is present. In the end, we fall prey to a kind of negative theology without exit again. Moreover, it all seems to be another

¹⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-texte* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: The Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 31.

¹⁸ Lieven Boeve, “Theological Truth, Particularity and Incarnation: Engaging Religious Plurality and Radical Hermeneutics,” in *Orthodoxy, Process and Product*, ed. Mathijs Lamberigts, Lieven Boeve and Terrence Merrigan, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium* 227 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), p. 337.

¹⁹ John D. Caputo, *On Religion* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 109–141.

²⁰ Cf. Lieven Boeve, “Theological Truth in the Context of Contemporary Continental Thought: The Turn to Religion and the Contamination of Language,” in *The Question of Theological Truth: Philosophical and Interreligious Perspectives*, ed. Frederiek Depoortere and Magdalen Lambkin, (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 77–100.

philosophical variation on the paradigm of religious pluralism.²¹ Particular religious traditions represent the contamination of the original religion which is to be found beyond all of them. Theologically speaking, we leave seekers twisting in the wind.

Richard Kearney criticizes such inevitably negative theologies. In his book *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*,²² he argues that such a wholly inaccessible otherness might create, as the title indicates, terrible counterfeits of God. Kearney's attempt to make Christianity understandable in postmodern conditions is dependent upon his reinterpretation of Ex 3:14. Usual English translations read this phrase: "I am who I am."²³ Instead of the onto-theological reading insisting on the verb *esse* in the present tense, Kearney proposes an alternative interpretation focusing on the future: "I will be who I will be." Kearney's God, *who may be*, is a God engaged in history.²⁴ How to speak about this strange God? Kearney suggests the way of *anatheism* – "a third way between the extremes of dogmatic theism and militant atheism."²⁵ Anatheism is a wager on faith which is open to dark nights, doubt and uncertainty. Thus, for Kearney, it seems to be more important to *have* faith instead of *naming* faith. This risk may result in a more mature and committed faith, but also it may end up in a hopeless agnosticism or even atheism. The darkness might evoke deep mystical experiences, or anxiety and despair. In short, we are balancing on the edges between faith and non-faith. Perhaps this is the right point where the Church needs to dwell for a while in order to appeal to seekers.

But there is still the question whether Kearney, like other postmodern thinkers, does not dismiss religious language too quickly. Aren't we still locked in negations? It makes sense that after modern attempts to apply *clear and distinct* ideas in the speech of God, postmodern authors recuperate negative theology in their respective thinking of God. They want to emphasize genuine otherness and its inexpressibility. For postmodernists, God is hidden, incomprehensible,

²¹ Cf. Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 9–12. Although D'Costa does not refer to the aforementioned postmodern authors, his description of pluralism resembles to the main arguments of philosophy of deconstruction with regard to religion.

²² Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Ideas of Otherness* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003).

²³ This way reads NRSV and NAS. KJV reads similar: "I am that I am."

²⁴ Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, pp. 1–8.

²⁵ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 3.

absent.²⁶ This sense of otherness is in some way very correct and reveals something true. It cannot, however, be applied in theological-philosophical discourse one-sidedly. What if all the attempts to avoid the naming of faith are wrong and, at the end, misleading? What if we can neither purify religious language, nor perfect it? What if the only acceptable way, at least the only way for Christian theology, is to enjoy the crisis of language?

THE CRISIS OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Rowan Williams suggests that authentic religious language is always under pressure.²⁷ According to this significant Welch theologian, there are three basic modes of what might be called the habit of speaking about God: (1) The mode of superficial invoking of God in non-religious situations such as “where is the God bloody hammer; God knows; oh my God,” etc. (2) A classical religious speech which can be found in catechisms, sermons, among disputing believers, the speech grounded in prescriptions, sanctions, “yes-no” answers. In short, a descriptive mode of language removes all the mystery of God’s being for the sake of our understanding. Nevertheless, there is still one more possibility: (3) the language of God as a creative uncertainty and inescapability. In other words, the language is put under pressure; the language has reached its limits. Williams argues that it is only in the third case where we engage with genuine religious language. Or we can put it conversely: language becomes religious only under pressure.

Williams reminds us that language is not just a system of stimulus and response. We cannot really control or predict the reply in language. We can agree with Jean-François Lyotard that the phrase *a* always provokes a responding phrase.²⁸ However, whether it will be the phrase *b*, *c*, *d*, or *x* or perhaps even the phrase of silence, nobody can control. In religious language, there is no last word. Arguably, this is an eternal temptation of human beings, the temptation to have the last word, to

²⁶ Cf. Lieven Boeve, “The Rediscovery of Negative Theology Today: The Narrow Gulf between Theology and Philosophy,” in *Théologie négative*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti, Biblioteca dell'Archivio di filosofia (Padova: CEDAM, 2002), pp. 446–447.

²⁷ Cf. Rowan Williams, “Making Representations: Religious Faith and the Habits of Language” (The University of Edinburgh, November 04, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEA9467E8E8D991AE>, accessed November 24, 2013.

²⁸ Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Different: Phrases in Dispute* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. xi-xvi and 135-145.

possess an exhaustive answer and reach the point when nothing more can be said. Interestingly, religious people suffer from this ambition more than any other people. Fortunately, it is not possible to remove language from its crisis. There is always something more to be said.

One possible way of how to put language under pressure is to question. Tomáš Halík, a Czech theologian and philosopher, elaborates on this topic in relation to Kearney's ideas. Besides the metaphor of a God who may be, Halík identifies perhaps a more appealing one for how to address the question of God in the current context. He proposes to reconsider the notion of *an unknown God* (Acts 17:23).²⁹ The current state of affairs resembles the situation of those who were listening to Paul on Areopagus. Many seekers ask what the Christian teaching is about. "Who is your God?" Instead of the catechism definitions, Halík suggests to direct our eyes at the altar of an unknown God.

However, with regard to the position of seekers, we must ask the following questions: (i) Is it possible to communicate Christian faith to someone who is not familiar with the symbolic language of Christianity? (ii) May we consider the experience with *an unknown God* as an authentic experience with God without anchoring it in some narrative about God?

The methodological distinction between the strategies *ad intra* as well as *ad extra*, proposed in section 1, does not help here. Seekers are neither fully inside the Church, nor outside of it. Seekers stand in the middle, in between the Church and the others. They are both the others as well as those among us. They are in the between (*in medio*). What is most needed might be therefore called a strategy of the middle—*in medio*. Seekers are culturally familiar with the Christian narrative because Christianity is still present in the European culture (e.g. architecture, literature, art).³⁰ Seekers are explicitly sympathetic towards the Christian

²⁹ This concept is unpacked in chapter VI of this volume (Martin Kočí and Pavel Roubík, "An Unknown God of Paradox: Tomáš Halík on Faith in a Secular Age") which is dedicated solely to Halík's theological contribution to the current theological-philosophical debate in a secular age.

³⁰ I think of my home town of Prague. Although Prague is the capital of one of the most secular countries in Europe, Christianity is present at every corner. The citizens might not be conscious about it, but they live in the midst of Christian symbols and signs of many kinds. This, of course, forms their world-views. Thus, this cultural presence of Christianity might be one of the causes why we meet so many seekers in a postmodern age. Halík expresses something similar: "We cannot fail to notice the presence of faith in all places where the biblical message shape culture and the relationship of human beings to the world. In the Euro-Atlantic spiritual space, we find the Christian faith at every corner and even beyond the borders of 'religion'." Tomáš Halík, *Žít s*

interpretation of the world. The question is how to communicate faith to them. Halík says that “God reveals himself in questions.”³¹ The questions asked by seekers, the questions directed at an unknown God, might be a new way of the presenting God – the way *in medio*.

The fact that God becomes something of a stranger is not necessarily an impasse. Moreover, this does not apply only for seekers but also for dwellers. The current crisis is not a threat, as Halík often reminds us. Rather it is a chance to open new ways of understanding God and interpreting the role of Christianity in the world. The paradox of seekers, who are simultaneously inside and outside, exposes the fragility of religious language. It shows that our God-talk cannot be final and comprehensive. It is always provisional. Furthermore, to approach seekers does not imply to turn them to dwellers. According to Halík, the question is stated in a different way. Does the Church offer some space for seekers, while simultaneously allowing them to remain seekers?

In my opinion, the aforementioned Williams suggests a reasonable way in a contemporary context. He insists that we put language under pressure in order to discover more.³² Think of science, literature, philosophy, and poetry. In all these realms we deliberately make things more difficult in order to go deeper. Why should theology be withdrawn from this perplexing marvel of language? In fact, the traditional theology has ever been witnessing the beauty of crisis in naming God. For example, the creed, dogmas, and of course, Scripture itself is language under pressure. Seekers questioning God must know that what the Church believes is a true language but also inadequate. The words of naming God used by the traditional confessions of the Church are the best words one can probably find, but it must be clear that these words, at the same time, fall short. To put it differently, the task of the Church, while communicating with seekers, is not only to put religious language under pressure but also to show the pressure *within* language itself. “If I am showing that it is difficult to talk about God, I am showing the truth about God.”³³

The words we use for telling the story of God are never enough. There is always something missing. The task of theology is not to cover the gap. On the contrary, theology must unveil this gap; i.e. the difficulty

tajemstvím: Podněty k promýšlení víry (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny: 2013), p. 18.

³¹ Tomáš Halík, *Chci, abys byl: Křesťanství po náboženství* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2012), p. 15.

³² Rowan Williams, “Religious Language under Pressure” (Radboud University Nijmegen, December 13, 2013).

³³ Ibid.

of language about God in order to be truthful about God. It is a hard task to speak about God. It is a hard task to communicate faith. The Church must not be embarrassed to confess that to speak of God is both a matter of excitement and trauma.

What about to move on even a step further. It seems reasonable to suggest a new strategy – an inverse strategy complementary to the preceding theological outline. A first question, for the Church's part, should not be what dwellers can say to seekers about God, but what seekers may say about God to dwellers. The issue at stake is not to teach seekers how to dwell in the Church. On the contrary, dwellers must join seekers, dwell among them for a while, and thus learn how to seek God. Halík curiously reverses a liturgical dialogue between the priest and catechumen which takes place right before the act of baptism. A traditional order reads as follows. Priest: "What do you ask from the Church?" Catechumen replies: "Knowing Christ." Priest continues: "Why do you want to know Christ?" Catechumen: "To become his disciple." Halík's proposes a different ordering. It is seekers beyond the borders of the Church who pose the question: "What do you want from us?" Christians should listen to them carefully and then respond: "Knowing Christ." Seekers, however, might continue: "Why do you want to know Christ?" The answer is: "To become his disciples."³⁴ Indeed, it is seekers who show that "each Christian is a *homo viator* and the Church is the *communio viatorum*."³⁵

CONCLUSION

What is the lesson from a postmodern quest? When we wrestle with the ambiguity of religious language, we should avoid the temptation of explanation. Rather, our struggle must evoke a perplexing, yet marvellous experience of standing in front of mystery; both *tremendum et fascinans*, as Rudolf Otto aptly puts it. Religious language is not meant to clear things but to evoke the event of the living God. This is what the Christian tradition is about: "as a whole... is this continuing process of the conversion of human language to God."³⁶

What is then our problem? Is it only a matter of language? I dare to say, the problem is the loss of wisdom. Postmodern thinkers criticise modern rationalism and they are right in many respects. They

³⁴ Tomáš Halík, *Divadlo pro anděly: Život jako náboženský experiment* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2010), pp. 146-147.

³⁵ Tomáš Halík, *Stromu zbývá naděje: Krize jako šance* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2009), p. 200.

³⁶ Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, p. 35.

deconstruct a monstrous creature of modern rationality. They might, however, forget a constructive path of wisdom. It does not mean to go back before modernity. We have to find a new unity in our – postmodern – way. Perhaps those who are *in the middle* are tired of deconstruction and afraid of the way back the Church seems to promote. They are hungry for a new unity, for wisdom in a postmodern way.

Wisdom, the Greeks said, is the love of the highest things, all of them, the true, the good and the beautiful. It includes reason without stopping at reason; it includes truth but it does not reduce truth to that which is established by reason, and it does not exclude the good and the beautiful from the true. The true, the good and the beautiful hang together.

Wisdom included insight and intuition as well as definitions and arguments (the true); it included action, living well, ethical and political wisdom (the good), not just professional knowledge; and it included Plato's idea that a life surrounded by beautiful things promotes the beauty of the soul (the beautiful).³⁷

Perhaps Halík points out a possible solution. It is neither a change of external structures, nor an accommodation to a current culture. We have to move into the depth. It is about our ability to be authentically particular (not exclusive). In this context, Halík's proposal that the Church should recontextualize itself into a shape of the medieval university makes sense. On the ground of the university, every question is permitted. Such an ecclesiological model would allow space for those *in medio* and preserve the Church to be a place where the Christian particularity is confirmed, yet not absolute. It would be a porous particularity but still a particularity without embarrassment. In practice, the Church must go out of the temple and enter into the courtyard of nations (seekers). The Church must seek God with seekers.

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³⁷ John D. Caputo, *Truth* (London: Penguin Books), pp. 23-24.

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